

Questioning Strategies Utilized by Pre-service Teachers and Its Implications

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Questioning Strategies Utilized by Pre-service Teachers
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ABSTRACT

Questioning skills are necessary to help students learning successfully. The more teachers employ questioning strategies, the better questioning skills they have. Pre-service Teachers (PSTs) as the prospectus teachers need to pose this skill. This research is a qualitative research aimed at investigating the strategies that are used by the PSTs and figuring out its implications. The data sources of the research were video recordings of field experience examination. There were 8 recordings of field experience examination taken from 8 respondents. The recordings were analyzed to figure out the questioning strategies used by the PSTs. The results showed that the most percentage of question strategies is sequencing (32.5%). The following three questions strategies are participation (27.5%), student questions (27.5%) and wait time (12.5%). The seven PSTs utilized two to four question strategies. The other four strategies which are adaptation, probing, phrasing, and balance have not been used by the PSTs. It might because PSTs have not acknowledged and realized the importance of utilizing questioning strategies. The recommendation proposed are: Micro teaching as the course preparing the PSTs to teach real English classes has to emphasize the maximum use of question strategies; also, it is necessary that questioning skills are integrated into Speaking for Instructional Purposes course in order that the PSTs consciously attempt to pose more various and better questions strategies.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

While questioning skills are viewed as important skill in teaching, little research has been conducted on the questioning strategies used by PSTs in Indonesia. Even, questions seem not take important role in teaching. Questions posed by PSTs are mainly questions of exercises which require students to recall facts or some information from the given text. Many English classes of Indonesian class setting are conducted quite silently with few questions. In this sense, teachers play important role in posing questions. PSTs are prepared to be teachers and expected to have good questioning strategies. Questioning strategy is generally used by teachers to help students to participate in discussions, check their homework or seatwork completion, review past lessons, and motivate them to continue acquiring new knowledge on their own (Ocbian & Pura, 2015).

The PSTs in this present research are the third year students who have taken theoretical and practical courses. The theoretical ones are *Teaching Design For Adult Learners*, *Approaches and Methods of English Language Teaching*, *Speaking for Instructional Purposes*, and the practical one is *Micro Teaching*. After the completion of those courses, the students are obliged to join field experience. They are placed in a certain secondary school and assigned to teach some English classes. At school, they are usually assigned to teach tenth or eleventh graders. Since this field experience program is held annually, I have been experiencing of being an advisor in different schools. An advisor is responsible for giving advices and guiding the PSTs during the program as well as paying a visit to the schools. The PSTs may consult on how to prepare lesson plan for certain material and things related to English instruction.

Based on my personal observation, most of English PSTs asked fewer questions to students in class. When they asked questions, they usually asked low-order questions rather than higher-order questions. It is in line with the previous researches, (Khan & Inamullah, 2011) of which the result showed that lower order

questions were mostly asked by the teachers than higher order. Therefore, gaining understanding on how PSTs utilize questions is becoming interesting to be investigated to later propose some recommendations after the findings.

Some previous researches on questioning strategies have been conducted. The first one was a descriptive research investigated questioning strategies of literature teachers (Ocbian & Pura, 2015). While another research was experimental method investigated the impact of questioning techniques and recitation on student learning (M. D. Gall & Rhody, 1987). Those two researches and the present research are similar on the investigated theme that is questioning strategies. The method of the present research is closely related to Ocbian research. Yet, the respondents were not teachers but PSTs and the implications of using questioning strategies would be revealed. And most importantly this present research proposes some possible recommendations to prepare PSTs to be equipped with questioning skills to promote successful learning.

1.1 Research Questions

Actually, the PSTs have been equipped with a practice of how to ask question effectively. They have taken some courses before joining field experience program. Based on the personal observation, it showed that PSTs asked fewer questions in class. When they asked questions, mostly the questions were not engaging the students to gain new knowledge. Therefore, this research considers these following questions: what questioning strategies are utilized by the PSTs and what are the implications of the questions strategies utilized by the PSTs?

2.0 REVIEW TO RELATED LITERATURE

It is generally known that questioning strategies very closely related to Taxonomy Bloom. . It has been widely used by educators and researchers as well in measuring things deal with questioning. New Bloom's Taxonomy outlines six levels remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating (Anderson, Krathwol, 2001). These levels are ordered from concrete to abstract and have been categorized between lower- and higher-order thinking skills. Lower-order thinking (LOT) requires students recall of information or apply concepts or knowledge while higher-order thinking (HOT) requires more complex process of conceiving, manipulating, and dealing abstractly with ideas. Those skills are needed for analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and creation. On the contrary, Booker in (Whitacre, Esquiedo, & Ruiz-escalante, 2013) attributes that the low performance of U.S. students when compared to international students to the overuse of Bloom's taxonomy. Many educators and teacher preparation programs expect students to think critically about concepts when they have no or limited factual knowledge. We, as either educators or researchers have to take into consideration the argument. Very importantly that students build a strong foundation on the knowledge and comprehension of basic concepts before asking them to analyze, evaluate, and create something based on the context. At the same time questions should not only lower order questions. It has to be a package of good questions covering low-order questions to higher-order questions provided by teachers to facilitate students to be able to think more abstract and critically.

Questioning skills are necessary for teachers worldwide. To be specific asking effective questions is important for some reasons. Firstly, it prompts students to understand the discussed material better. Also, questions trigger them to construct ideas and think critically to find out answers. Thirdly, they will feel succeed learning when they can cope with questions asked by their teachers. In the opposite, they might have a feeling of being failed when they cannot answer questions which are directed to them. Seeing the importance of effective questioning, teachers need to be skilful in posing questions. Yet, questioning is not a given skill. To have good questioning skills, it needs practice. Questioning does not merely ask any question without any purpose underlies. Questions have to be purposeful and well planned in order that students are benefit from the questions.

Questions in the class serve as different functions. According to Kauchak and Eggert in (3a, 2009) the functions are grouped into three categories: diagnostic, instructional and motivational. As a diagnostic tool, classroom questions allow the teacher to glimpse into the mind of students to find out how they think about a topic. For the instructional function, questions are used to facilitate learners to learn the new knowledge. As to motivational function, skillful use of questions can effectively involve students in the classroom discourse, encouraging and challenging them to think. In terms of its functions, there are several detailed reasons why questions are so commonly used in teaching and learning:

1. they stimulate and maintain students' interest.

2. they encourage students to think and focus on the content of the lesson. They enable a teacher to clarify what a student has said.
 3. they enable a teacher to elicit a particular structure or vocabulary items.
 4. they enable teachers to check students' understanding.
- they encourage student participation in a lesson

In fact, many teachers often are not aware with the functions of questions. They mostly ask questions that require the recall of factual information. Students mostly are required to memorize rather than analyze or interpret information. It shows that teachers have not thrown good questions that require students to think deeper and have well-thought in answering questions. Good questions should be continuum of questions from low-order questions but also higher-order questions. Essential questions are not bad. Yet asking such questions to more often will not benefit students a lot. Much exposure of divergent questions will guide students to acquire new concept better. To sum up, knowing the function of the questions that are going to be asked will raise teachers' awareness in asking questions.

Teacher Talk, a newsletter for educators dedicated to promoting best practices in the classroom suggested that successful questionnaires utilize several skills when asking good questions. These include: phrasing and sequencing questions effectively, responding to questions so that class time is used efficiently, keeping questions from leading to digression is useful, and using the right tone and delivery both when asking and responding questions, Teacher Talk in (Mccomas & Abraham, 1991)

Techniques for Successful Questioning are:

1. Phrasing; teacher communicates the questions so that the students understand the response expectation (ie: no run-on question)
2. Adaptation; teacher adapts the question being asked to fit the language and ability level of the students.
3. Sequencing; teacher asks the questions in a patterned order indicating purposeful questioning strategy
4. Balance; teacher asks both convergent and divergent questions and balances the time between the two types. The teacher uses questions at an appropriate level or levels to achieve the objectives of the lesson.
5. Participation; teacher uses questions to stimulate a wide range of student participation, encouraging response from volunteering and non-volunteering students, redirects initially asked questions to other students.
6. Probing; teacher probes initial student answers, and encourages students to complete, clarify, expand, or support their answers.
7. Wait Time (Think Time); teacher pauses three to five seconds after asking a question to allow students time to think. The teacher also pauses after students' initial responses to questions in class.
8. Student questions; teacher requires students to generate questions of their own.

Richards&Lockhart in (Ma, 2009)

In other words, questions are teaching tool which can lead a successful learning. In so doing, preparing questions is necessary as well as considering the functions of questions. Further, questionings skills are required in order that the targeted objectives can be achieved. To have a good questioning skills, posing wide range questions from low order to higher order questions is needed since students have to construct ideas on their own. After deciding what questions to be posed, utilizing various question strategies also needs to be taken in account.

3.0 RESEARCH METHOD

The field experience lasted for three months. Among the class meetings, there was one meeting considered to be recorded for examination. The recording was submitted to the advisor to be assessed. This present research was taking the video recordings of examination of PSTs in two different secondary schools, a secondary state school and an Islamic state school. The PSTs were third year students of English Education Department of Universitas Muria Kudus. The participants were eight PSTs, four of them were placed at the private vocational high school and the rest were at the state Islamic school. The seventh participants were females and only one male, who was placed in the vocational high school. While the PSTs examinee was teaching, other colleagues were recording it. Then the recordings were submitted. In this present research,

there were eight recordings of eight PSTs were analysed. Analysis focused on the questioning strategies used by PSTs during English instruction. Procedural questions and other questions dealt with classroom management were not analyzed. The data were analyzed based on the eight question strategies, they are: participation, probing, phrasing, adaptation, wait time, sequencing, balance and student question and their frequency of use was determined, Teacher Talk in (Mccomas & Abraham, 1991).

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After analysing the data, the results and discussion is presented as follows:

3.1 Questioning Strategies Utilized by PSTs

The techniques of questioning utilized by the PSTs are viewed in Table 1.

Table 1. Question Techniques Utilized by PSTs

No	Question Strategy	PST1	PST2	PST3	PST4	PST5	PST6	PST7	PST8	Total	Percentage
1	Participation	1	1	1	1	0	5	1	1	11	27.5%
2	Probing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
3	Phrasing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
4	Adaptation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
5	Wait time	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	5	12.5%
6	Sequencing	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	13	32.5%
7	Balance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
8	Student questions	0	0	1	1	1	1	6	1	11	27.5%
	Total	3	4	4	5	3	8	9	4	40	100%

From the table it can be seen that the most used question technique was the sequencing with total frequency of 13 (32.5%). It is followed by participation and student questions with 11 (27.5%), and wait time with 5(12.5%). Probing, phrasing, adaptation, and balance with no frequency at all. Sequencing is the most used question technique by PSTs in class. It can be noted that among the PSTs, they posed different question strategies. The number of question strategies was ranged from 2 to 4 strategies with the frequency as shown in Table 1. The question strategies utilized by the PSTs were participation, wait time, sequencing, and student questions. The use of this question technique that can be recognized in this cited discussion is as follows:

The PST: Do you know what report text?.

What is report text? (no wait time)

According to Oxford university, report text is ...

Have you understood with the definition?

Do you know it's generic structure?

There are two (no wait time)

It can be noted that the PSTs asked so many questions in sequence with a purpose to explain the students the material that would be discussed. The PSTs in this case did not give the students a chance to answer the questions since there was no wait time. It was only 2 seconds of wait time and the questions were answered by the PSTs. This questioning strategy as stated by Mc Comas is purposeful. Here, the PSTs intentionally used this patterned questions in order to acknowledge the students with the material that would be discussed. These questions were asked in the very beginning of class after opening the class or in the end of class. The reason was clear, that was to review or preview the material. The other PSTs used sequencing strategy for checking the students' understanding. The PSTs got used to ask using this strategy. They had prepared the questions which led the students to understand the material being learnt. Unfortunately, the PSTs were seldom to go deeper asking about the concept. The questions were merely about definition, the generic structure, the pattern of particular grammar, etc. Reasons of employing those kind of questions

according to (Richards&Lockhart in (Ma, 2009) were ³ to elicit a particular structure or vocabulary items and enable teachers to check students' understanding.

While, the next strategy which is used with frequency of 11 (27.5%) is participation and student questions. The example of the PSTs' effort is shown as follows:

Teacher : Today I have some pictures. Do you know this place? (*the teacher was showing a picture of Prambanan temple, a destination of Indonesia*)

Students: *Candi Prambanan*

Teacher : *dimana tempatnya?*

Students: *prambanan*

Teacher : Have you ever been there?

Students: yes

Teacher : *Siapa yang sudah pergi kesana?*

Students: *belum, saya belum pernah.*

Teacher : *ada yang belum ya. Bagaimana kesannya?*

Teacher : Now the next picture, *the teacher was showing a picture of Eiffel*)

Students: Eiffel..eifel.. (*while laughing*)

Teacher : have you ever been there?

Students: from TV...

Teacher : between prambanan temple and Eiffel, do you like ...*mana?*

Students: paris...

Teacher : *mengapa? Jika kalian mau pergi kesana kalian mau ngapain?*

Students: *foto foto...*

The above extract showed that the PST 5 questioned the students and encouraged them to participate in answering the questions. The PST showed two pictures and elicited whether the students had been there before. The PSTs also used the second language and repeated the questions to let all students participated in answering the questions. Consequently, all of the students responded the questions while cheering sometimes. The questions given were the same with different pictures. Here, the PST was the one who posed participation technique more a lot than others. Commonly, in utilizing participation strategy, the PSTs involve the whole students in answering the questions. They did not focus on one student and move to others. The students seemed comfortable to answer questions in class. When they were asked individually, they often showed ashamed and not confident giving the answer. Or, they usually answered in a very simple sentence like 'yes'. The PST actually could design the questions from the complex to the simplest to elicit students' answer to finally ² with the targeted answer. Yet, the observed effort showed that the PSTs were not asking more deeply. As a question technique, participation is often used to a class who could not give the correct, exact answer to a certain question at once. The teacher exhausts every question, from complex to simple, dividing the ideas of the question to simplify them, relating students' answer one after another to finally come up with the most exact one (Ocbian & Pura, 2015)

¹ Another question strategy with the same frequency was student questions. Student questions were when teacher requires students to generate questions of their own. Here, the questions which were thrown to the students mostly were single questions after explaining the discussed material. The question was "any question", "any question so far", or the same sense question in the second language, *ada pertanyaan?* Yet as commonly happen in Indonesian class, the students tended to be silent and were not willing to ask any question. There was ² only one student asked question when T5 asked such a question. (Ocbian & Pura, 2015) states that when the culture dominating the classroom, students never ask questions. They are hesitant and permissive to the culture inside the classroom. They are hesitant that they might ask the wrong questions and might be laughed at by their classmates. Similarly, Indonesian students seemed to be ashamed to ask questions even simple questions.

Then for wait time, the PSTs paused or waited to get students' responses from 2 seconds to 12 seconds. The PST 1 was indicated to have short wait time that was 2 seconds. While the PST 6 showed to have the longest wait time that was 12 seconds. The other PSTs had a wait time around 3 seconds. Yet, the same PST did not always to have the same length of wait time in one class meeting. It is understandable, since the PSTs used questions before delivering a certain material to get the students' attention. While a good wait time according to (Mccomas & Abraham, 1991) was three to five seconds. Yet, the PSTs tend to shorten the wait time when the students seemed not understand with the questions. For those who really posed questions for eliciting, they usually had a quite durable wait time. On the opposite, when questions were thrown for the sake of getting the right answer from students, the wait time tend to be shorter. There was a worry to see the students answered incorrectly.

For strategy of probing, phrasing, adaptation, and balance were not found at all. It might because the PSTs were not familiar with those techniques. Initially, I thought that some belonged to adaptation. In fact, they were not because they were not intended to simplify the language to be fitted with the students' level. They asked simple questions but it was not the process of adapting information from any text then made it simple for the students. The simple questions usually were dealing with procedural matters including classroom management. Some reasons why the four strategies were not found might because the PSTs were not knowledgeable about them. Providing these questions was not easy since it should have been well prepared. The questions are believed to promote students critical thinking especially balance strategy. In balance strategy, the questions given should have been balance between low order questions and high order questions. Higher order questions require higher order thinking skills. In other words, when students can fulfill the questions, it can be said that the students have critical thinking competency (Rusiana, 2016)

From the findings, it was observed that question strategies utilized by the PSTs were participation, wait time, sequencing, and student questions. The number of question strategies utilized by each teacher was ranged from 2 to 4 strategies. It was also identified that they used to ask questions which was at the level of knowledge, recalling fact. Also, they asked questions to get the students' attention for introducing new topic, gain the students' responses, and so forth. Almost always, the PSTs asked very basic questions dealing with the material for instance: *What is descriptive text?*; *What is the generic structure of descriptive text?*. They almost did not ask questions about the content of the discussed material deeper to help the students construct ideas on their own. The questions were merely posed for the sake of asking especially reviewing of previewing about the material. Mostly, the given questions are to check the students' understanding. Such questions are categorized as instructional function with a reason of checking the students' understanding (Richards&Lockhart in Ma (2008). Brown & Wragg in Khan (2015) also discusses the result study of (M. Gall, 1984) who noted that 6 percent of teacher questions required pupils to recall facts in much the same way as that in which they were presented, and only twenty percent required pupils to think beyond the level of recall; the remaining percent involved procedural matters such as classroom management. Similarly, in this present research, there were also questions which could not be put into the seven strategies because they belonged to procedural matters.

3.2 Implication of the Use of Question Strategies

The only four question strategies utilized by the PSTs with the most percentage of sequencing, followed by participation and student questions, and wait time might imply some things. Firstly, the PSTs have not realized the importance of employing question strategies in teaching English. They focused a lot more on the presentation and class management during the class. An effort of questioning the students with the aim of helping students to construct their own understanding of the discussed material have not emerged yet. Secondly, they tended to focus on the material and go along with the lesson plan with a quite strict steps of pre, whilst, and post teaching. It caused them not to be aware of the importance of questioning strategies in English instruction. The teaching scenario seemed customized and there was no room for them to develop their questioning skills.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of results and discussion the following conclusions are drawn. The most percentage of question strategies is sequencing (32.5%). The following three questions strategies are participation (27.5%), student questions (27.5%) and wait time (12.5%). The seven PSTs utilize two to four question strategies. The other four strategies which are adaptation, probing, phrasing, and balance have not been used by the PSTs. They actually need to be taken into account since utilizing all of the strategies will benefit the students and lead them to learn successfully. The PSTs possibly have not acknowledged and realized the importance of utilizing questioning strategies. Their paradigm probably is still “teaching is explaining”. They take greater part in explaining, not questioning. When they ask questions, almost always it deals with getting things done dealing with classroom management. Thus, some recommendations are presented in this present research. First, *Micro teaching* as the course preparing the PSTs to teach real English class needs to emphasize the maximum use of questioning. The PSTs should have a clear understanding of the urge of utilizing question strategies to prompt the students learn successfully. In addition, questioning skills can be integrated into *Speaking for Instructional Purposes* course. When it is intentionally integrated into a course, consciously the PSTs will attempt to pose more various and better questions.

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